

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) Method for suppressing the evaporation of zinc in the hot dip coating of steel strip (3) with zinc or zinc alloys, wherein the metal strip (3) is guided through a furnace snout (1) containing a first gas mixture (5) and immersed in the metal bath (2), guided around a deflecting roller (7) in the metal bath (2), and then emerges from the metal bath (2) at the top, wherein a second, isolating gas mixture is present in the furnace snout (1) above the metal bath (2) as an isolating gas (4) between the surface of the metal bath and the first gas mixture (5), wherein the second, isolating gas mixture is argon with admixtures of butane and/or propane.

2-5. (Canceled)